

# CHAPTER 2

## FAMILY DIVERSITY IN FRANCE, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, EAST AND WEST GERMANY: OVERVIEW ON LIVING ARRANGEMENTS AND LIVING CONDITIONS

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## 1 - INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960s, Europe has undergone major changes in its demographic behaviour. Marriage and fertility rates have declined, divorce rates have increased and first births and marriages have been postponed. Furthermore, there has been an upsurge in lifelong childlessness, a spread of non-marital unions and a rise in non-marital fertility. These processes have been described and discussed thoroughly in the literature (Van de Kaa 1987, Lesthaeghe 1995, Coleman 1996, Kučera et al. 2000, Council of Europe 2005, Frejka et al. 2008). Even though previous research has provided an extensive account of demographic change in Europe, the consequences of these changes for the socio-economic situation of families in different countries are much less well studied. Empirical studies have pointed out the adverse effects that divorce has on income, poverty risks and life satisfaction (Amato 2000, Furstenberg and Kiernan 2001). Another strand of literature discusses what consequences the increase in maternal employment has for the economic performance of families (Maxwell 1990, Lichter and Eggebeen 1994, Esping-Andersen 2006). Furthermore, how non-marital childbearing is related to welfare dependency and poverty risks of the household has been investigated (Garfinkel et al. 2003, Lichter et al. 2003). Despite these attempts to understand the social and economic consequences of changing family structures, we do not have a conclusive answer to the question how “families fare under the second demographic transition” (McLanahan 2004: 607).

This paper contributes to the existing literature by

analysing family diversity and living conditions in a cross-national perspective. We raise the question of how living arrangements and mothers’ employment behaviour influence families’ economic conditions in selected European countries. We compare families’ well-being in France, Germany and the Russian Federation. The rationale for choosing these countries is not only that they are the largest countries in Europe in terms of population size. They also differ widely with respect to living standards, family structures, maternal employment patterns and the social policy contexts. France supports the dual-earner model and is, at the same time, rather liberal towards non-standard living arrangements and family forms. Germany’s family policies have, until very recently, favoured the traditional “married single-earner male-breadwinner family”. The Russian Federation and also East Germany represent countries (in the case of East Germany, regions) where demographic behaviour and living conditions have been deeply influenced by the economic and social crisis that followed the collapse of communist systems<sup>2</sup>.

The paper is structured as follows: In the following part 2, we elaborate our theoretical arguments and provide basic information on the institutional contexts of France, the Russian Federation and East and West Germany. Part 3 displays family formation patterns and Part 4 gives a descriptive overview on the economic situation of families in the four regions. Part 5 focuses on the question of how family structure and maternal employment are related to a family’s economic well-being.

## 2 - THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### 2.1 Demographic change in France, the Russian Federation and East and West Germany

All European countries have experienced a decline in fertility rates around or below replacement level since the 1960s. Despite this commonality, there are remarkable differences in fertility and nuptiality patterns. France, Germany and the Russian Federation represent certain ideal types of welfare regimes as well as certain types of “family regimes”. France displays high fertility rates, high maternal employment rates and a large share of women who remain unmarried when they have children (see table 12). West Germany has record low levels of

fertility, a low percentage of full-time employed mothers and a moderate level of non-marital fertility. The Russian Federation was subject to profound societal and economic changes after the breakdown of communism. Like the Russian Federation, East Germany went through a period of major societal

<sup>2</sup> In this essay, West Germany refers to the territories of what used to be the Federal Republic of Germany (including West Berlin, if not stated otherwise). East Germany refers to the territories of what used to be the German Democratic Republic. Even though it might be more appropriate to refer to “East Germany” and “West Germany” for the time before unification and “Eastern States of Germany” and “Western States of Germany” for the period after unification, we decided to simply use the terms “East Germany” and “West Germany” for both periods.

and economic upheaval that manifested itself in high unemployment rates and growing labour market uncertainties. However, economic hardship was buffered in the East German case through German unification. Furthermore, living standards increased considerably after unification. Despite substantial labour market upheavals throughout the 1990s, maternal employment rates remained fairly high in East Germany. At the same time, non-marital fertility skyrocketed. Today 59 per cent of births are out-of-wedlock in East Germany, while this applies to only 22 per cent in West Germany. In the Russian Federation, non-marital fertility

increased only modestly after the demise of the communist system. But although the prevalence of non-marital fertility has remained comparatively low, the Russian Federation nevertheless displays “diverse” family structures due to its high divorce rates. Unfortunately, official statistics for the Russian Federation no longer provide total divorce rates. However, the development in the crude divorce rate and micro-level studies on divorce behaviour suggest further increases in divorce intensities after the year 2000 (Jasilioniene 2007, Muszynska 2007: 192).

**Table 12**

Demographic indicators by calendar year for France, the Russian Federation, and East and West Germany

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004
<b>Total fertility rate</b>						
France	2.73	2.47	1.95	1.78	1.88	1.91
West Germany	2.37	2.02	1.44	1.45 <sup>a)</sup>	1.41 <sup>a)</sup>	1.37 <sup>a)</sup>
East Germany	2.33	2.19	1.94	1.52 <sup>a)</sup>	1.21 <sup>a)</sup>	1.31 <sup>a)</sup>
Russian Federation	2.56	2.00	1.86	1.90	1.21	1.33
<b>Proportion non-marital births</b>						
France	6.10	6.80	11.40	30.10	42.60	46.40
West Germany	6.30	5.50	7.60	10.50	18.60	22.00
East Germany	11.60	13.30	22.80	35.00	51.50	57.80
Russian Federation	13.10	10.60	10.80	14.60	28.00	29.80
<b>Total divorce rate</b>						
France	0.10	0.12	0.22	0.32	0.38	0.42 <sup>b)</sup>
West Germany	--	0.15	0.23	0.31	0.42 <sup>c)</sup>	0.48 <sup>c)</sup>
East Germany	0.16	0.19	0.32	0.24	0.34 <sup>d)</sup>	0.40 <sup>d)</sup>
Russian Federation	0.17	0.34	0.42	0.40	--	--

Notes: a) Without Berlin; b) value for 2003; c) East Berlin included; d) East Berlin not included.

Source: Council of Europe (2004, 2005). Divorce rates for West and East Germany 2000 and 2004: Dorbritz (2007); total fertility rate for West and East Germany: Statistisches Bundesamt (2001) and data delivered by the German Statistical Office in personal correspondence.

## 2.2 Family diversity and social policies

The decline in marriage intensities, the increase in divorce rates and the rise in non-marital fertility have contributed to vastly changing family structures all over Europe. Despite the fact that family change is often seen as an essential and inevitable process of societal modernization (Lesthaeghe 1995, Van de Kaa 1987), the change in family structures also brings up the issue of rising social inequality among families. Empirical research has provided augmenting evidence that unmarried mothers fare worse than married mothers (Secombe 2000,

OECD 2008). However, it has also been pointed out that the economic situation of non-standard families differs between countries. Obviously, the welfare state context plays an important role in alleviating the economic constraints that are involved with unmarried parenthood. Social policies that enable mothers to work have been regarded as a key instrument in this context (Lewis 1992, Christopher 2002: 61, Skevik 2006). In countries that do little to support maternal employment and where marital unions receive prior treatment, non-standard families are at greater economic risk. The three

countries which we consider in our investigation differ widely in the ways they enable mothers to work and in the ways they favour the traditional married single-earner couple.

### *Social policies in France*

The French welfare regime is often characterized as one facilitating the compatibility of family and working lives (Becker 2000, Fagnani 2001, Fagnani and Letablier 2005, Reuter 2002: 6, Thévenon 2007: 15). A variety of policy measures supports maternal employment (Becker 2000: 198, Fagnani and Letablier 2003, Micheaux and Monso 2007). However, concerning the period since the early 1990s, studies are more critical as to the effects of social policy reforms. While the public provision of day care supports maternal employment, transfers such as the allocation parentale d'éducation (APE) also support the "homemaker model"<sup>3</sup>. APE, which was initially only granted to parents with three or more children, was extended to two-child parents in 1994. The change of regulation contributed to a decrease in the employment rates of two-child mothers whose youngest child is under three years of age (Reuter 2002: 18). Particularly poorly educated women use the APE in order to withdraw from the labour market, which contributes to a bifurcation of maternal employment patterns (Bonnet and Labbé 1999: 6, Reuter 2002: 18f., Toulemon et al. 2008: 532). Despite this development, France still displays one of the highest maternal full-time employment rates in Europe (Reuter 2003: 39f., Thévenon 2008: 4.).

Another concept that lies at the heart of French social policies is that any living arrangement with children is considered as a family (Lessenich and Ostner 1995: 796). For example, this notion is realized in the fiscal system insofar as the income tax is set not only according to the marital status but to the number of children as well. Thus, unmarried parents

<sup>3</sup> APE is a flat rate given to parents of children under three years of age and is linked to a previous employment of 2 years during the 10 and since the reform during the 5 years preceding birth. The level of benefit depends on the extent to which working hours are reduced (Becker 2000: 213). Complete withdrawal from the labour market allows for a grant of about €500, part-time work up to 50 per cent of legal regular working hours allows for a benefit of about €330 and parents working part-time up to 80 per cent of legal regular working hours receive about €250 (Becker 2000: 213, Périvier 2004: 336). According to the Caisse nationale des allocations familiales (CNAF), 80 per cent of all APE are granted at the full flat rate (Périvier 2004: 265). From 2004 onwards, APE is also granted to mothers of a first child for a period of six months after the birth (Toulemon et al. 2008: 532).

also benefit from this so-called "family splitting" (Fagnani 2006). Also in other respects, France is very supportive of new living arrangements. In 1999, the pacte civil de solidarité (PACS) was introduced that allows unmarried couples to register their partnerships. PACS gives couples social rights similar to those of a married couple, e.g. the same taxation (Martin and Théry 2001: 150f., Bradley 2001). France had already introduced equal treatment of unmarried and married children in the 1970s. Since 1987, unmarried parents have the option to apply for joint custody. However, the French social policy system also contains incentives to get married, particularly for people with a higher income (Amar and Guérin 2007: 34).

### *Social policies in Germany*

In the past, Germany has often been characterized as the ideal type of a conservative welfare regime that supports the male-breadwinner family (Gornick et al. 1998, Esping-Andersen 1999: 65, Treas and Widmer 2000: 1431). A major reason is the fact that Germany's tax system provides greater benefits to the "housewife model" than other countries do. Public day care for children below age three and full-time care for older children has been scarce for decades. Since 2005, however, the German Government has launched new family policies, among them an initiative to expand day care for children below age 3 and a parental leave scheme that is designed in style of the Swedish model (Leitner et al. 2008).

These new family policies are shifting Germany gradually towards a different kind of "social policy regime" that actively enhances maternal employment options. However, married and unmarried couples are still treated very differently. One of the differences is the possibility of joint taxation which only married couples can take advantage of<sup>4</sup>. Single mothers, however, have a somewhat advantaged position with respect to collecting certain types of transfers. Since they do not have a partner whose income is assessed when claiming benefits, single mothers have better access to means-tested benefits. Finally, non-marital couples are disadvantaged all along the way. The partner's income is accounted for when claiming social benefits, but they do not have the right to file their taxes jointly (Ostner 2001: 89).

<sup>4</sup> Due to the progressive tax schedule, joint taxation provides tax exemptions, in particular, if the incomes of the partners are very unequal.



### Differences between West and East Germany

After unification, the legal and political system of the formerly two parts of Germany was merged into one. The Unification Treaty, ratified in August 1990, laid down that the East German legal and political systems were to be replaced by the West German ones. However, some East German peculiarities remained in place. This particularly pertains to the public childcare system. In Germany, childcare policies are largely under the auspices of the federal states and local communities. After unification, many public day-care centres closed and there was concern that unification would be accompanied by a “sharp decline in the availability of childcare” (Rindfuss and Brewster 1996: 273).

Contrary to this expectation, public day care remained an item high on the agenda of East German communities. In 2006, there are 37 public day-care places for 100 children below age three

in East Germany, while there are only eight places per 100 children of this age in West Germany (see table 13). For children aged 3 to 6, German parents enjoy a right to a part-time space in public day care. However, there are striking differences in the availability of full-time care. This also pertains to the availability of after-school care, which is very important in Germany, where schools are only part-time. In West Germany, there are four places for 100 children in after-school care (Hort), while there are 33 of such places in East Germany per 100 children. Regarding differences in the availability of public day care, there are also marked differences in maternal employment patterns. Only about 20 per cent of West German women with children below age 16 are working full-time, while this applies to more than 50 per cent in East Germany (Kreyenfeld and Geisler 2006). Against this background, East and West Germany still partially display features of two distinctive welfare regimes.

**Table 13**

Public day care in Germany, 2006

	Places	Children	Availability Ratio
<b>West Germany</b>			
Ages 0–2 (Krippe)	137,660	1,690,227	8%
Ages 3–6 (Kindergarten)	1,901,072	2,446,400	78%
Ages 7–13 (Hort)	186,140	4,801,867	4%
<b>East Germany</b>			
Ages 0–2 (Krippe)	109,619	292,977	37%
Ages 3–6 (Kindergarten)	332,194	393,429	84%
Ages 7–13 (Hort)	197,274	596,324	33%

Note: Berlin has been excluded.

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt (2008)

### The Russian Federation

The overarching scheme of social change in the Russian Federation has been the economic crisis and the growing inequality in the society after the collapse of the Soviet system. Social grants offered by enterprises, such as special housing or health care programmes, have become important to complement the state’s welfare provision. These services vary markedly depending on the type of firm (Manning 1995: 204f.). The emergence of employment-related social benefits can be interpreted as a factor strengthening the divide between disadvantaged social groups with loose ties to the labour market and an economically better-off, well-integrated population.

With respect to family policy, several changes in measures were introduced after the demise of the Soviet system. The most important change concerns public day-care provision. Similar to East Germany, public childcare was an important means to realize the societal norm of the full-time employed mother during communism. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the availability of public day care has declined drastically and the costs of care have increased (Lokshin 2004: 1095)<sup>5</sup>. With the rising costs of care, low-income women can no

<sup>5</sup> Goskomstat, the national statistical office, reports a decline in the proportion of children attending a nursery or a kindergarten of more than half in the period between 1989 and 1997 (Goskomstat 1998, quoted in Lokshin 2004: 1095).

longer afford to pay for care, which is why informal care by non-working family members has become more widespread. Furthermore, policymakers have increasingly supported the model of the male breadwinner. Keeping women out of the labour market was regarded as an appropriate measure to overcome demographic problems and as a means to take away pressures from the labour market (Teplova 2007: 291). Against this background, it has been argued that women more often have to face the conflict of choosing between family and career roles than it was the case in the past (Zdravomyslova 1995: 198).

#### *Policy context and living situation of families*

Against the background of the different social policies, one would assume that living conditions of families differ widely between France, Germany and the Russian Federation – but also between East and West Germany. Given that France is rather liberal towards non-standard families and that maternal employment rates are comparatively high, one

would assume that “non-standard families” do not perform much worse than other types of families. East Germany is similar to France in the sense that public day care is widely available, encouraging women to stay gainfully employed after childbirth. Since the provision of day care supports women’s economic independence, we expect unmarried mothers in East Germany to perform similarly to married women. West German women have much more restricted access to public day care. Given that the tax and transfer system additionally prioritizes traditional families, non-standard families in West Germany should find themselves in a more disadvantaged economic situation than married couples and their families. In the Russian Federation, an unfavourable economic situation as well as an underdeveloped welfare state is expected to overshadow family dynamics. This leads us to assume that all types of families are confronted more often with adverse living conditions than is the case in the other countries under consideration here.

### 3 - FERTILITY PATTERNS IN FRANCE, THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND EAST AND WEST GERMANY

For our empirical investigations, we have used data from the Generations and Gender Survey (United Nations 2005, 2007). We have limited our sample to women aged 18 to 55 with at least one biological, step-, adopted or foster child who is age 16 or younger and lives in the same household as the respondent. By means of cross-tabulation as well as of logistic regression, we have compared the living conditions of these respondents in France, the Russian Federation and East and West Germany. Before presenting the empirical results, we provide an overview on differences in family formation patterns in all three countries (and four regions) (part 3.1). Our motivation for this initial investigation was that we wanted to limit our main analysis to women who have children. By comparing the family formation among the countries, we have tried to account for the peculiarities of the sample we selected in each country. Since we limit the analysis to women with children who still live in the household, it is also worthwhile to give an account of the number of children who do not live in the household any longer (part 3.2).

#### **3.1 Family formation patterns**

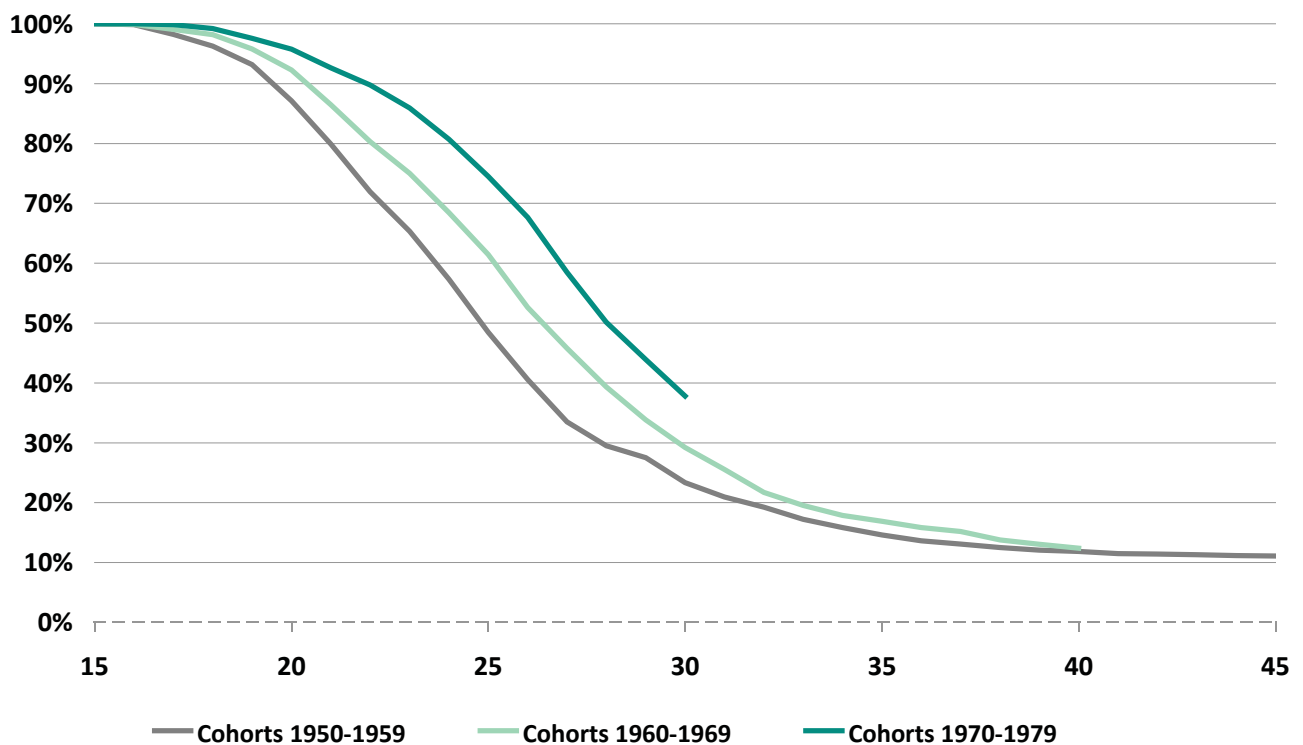
Figure IV illustrates the family formation patterns in France. The figure provides estimates from Kaplan-Meier survival curves which give the percentage of childless women by age of the woman. Similar to other Northern and Western European countries, age at first birth has increased with the cohorts born around 1950. While the median age at first birth was roughly age 25 for the 1950s cohorts, it has increased to 28 for the cohorts born in the 1970s. The final level of childlessness settles at 10 per cent and is rather low as compared to other Western European countries (Konietzka and Kreyenfeld 2007). West Germany has also experienced an increase in the age at childbirth since the 1950s cohort (figure V). Even though the median age at first birth and the ultimate level of childlessness are higher, the pattern looks similar to the French one<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Comparisons with vital statistics suggest that the German GGS understates fertility in older cohorts and overstates it in younger ones. This may explain why most other studies of West German fertility show a gradual increase in the ultimate level of childlessness and a drastic increase in the age at first birth in the post-1950s cohorts that is not reflected in the same way in the GGS data.

East Germany shows the most dramatic changes in family formation patterns over the cohorts (figure VI). While the median age at first birth of cohorts who were born in the 1960s was only 22, it increased to more than 26 for cohorts born in the 1970s. Contrary to developments in East Germany, the age at first birth has remained remarkably stable over cohorts in the Russian Federation (figure VII). There has been a modest increase in the age at first birth, if one compares the cohorts born in the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, one must conclude that, with only 22 years of age, by comparison Russian women are still very young at first birth.

Taken together, family formation patterns in France and West Germany can be characterized as a process of steady postponement since the cohorts born in the 1950s. In East Germany, we observe a radical postponement from cohorts born around 1970. In the Russian Federation, there is an amazing continuity of early age at motherhood. For our investigation, which focuses on women with children age 16 or younger, this means that the sample in the four cases under consideration will be rather different in terms of respondents' ages – with French and West German mothers being relatively old on average, Russian mothers being rather young and East German mothers being in between (see table 26).

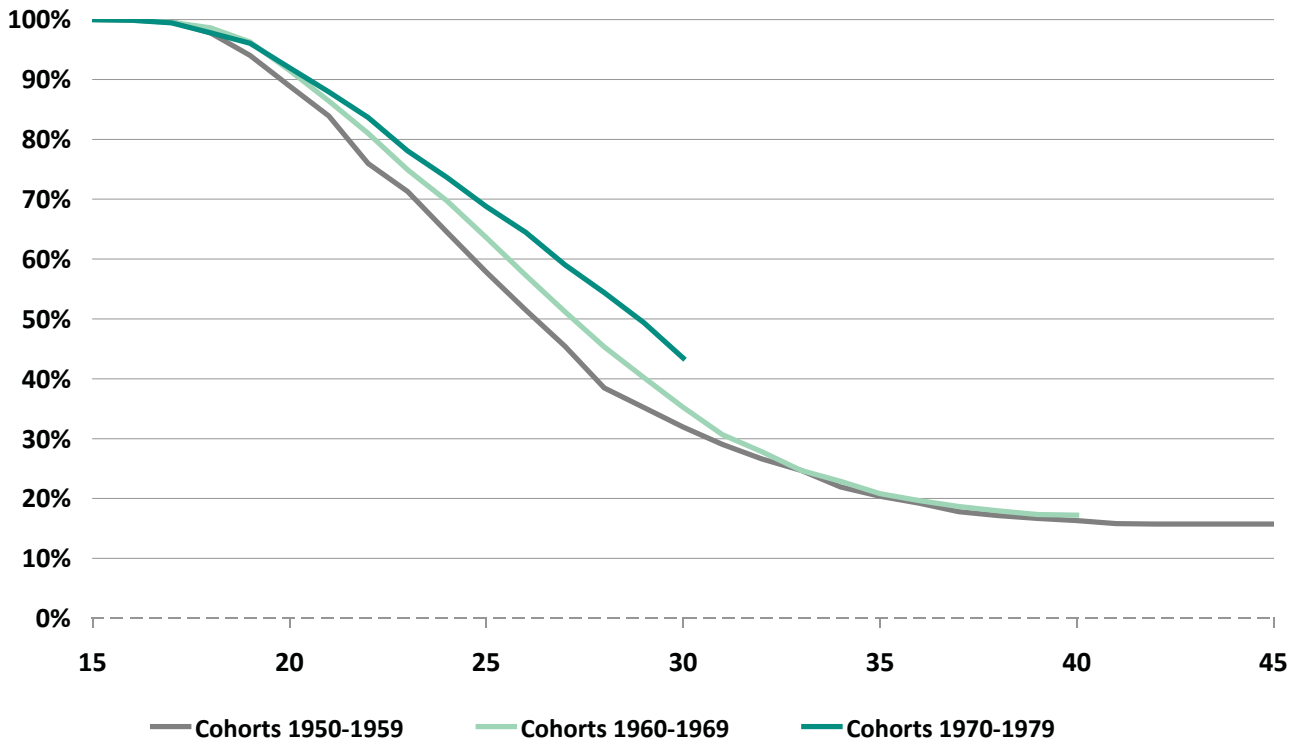
**Figure IV**  
Percentage of childless respondents, estimates from Kaplan-Meier survival curves, France



Note: Respondents who gave birth before age 15 were excluded from the sample.  
Source: GGS wave 1, weighted estimates

**Figure V**

Percentage of childless respondents, estimates from Kaplan-Meier survival curves, West Germany

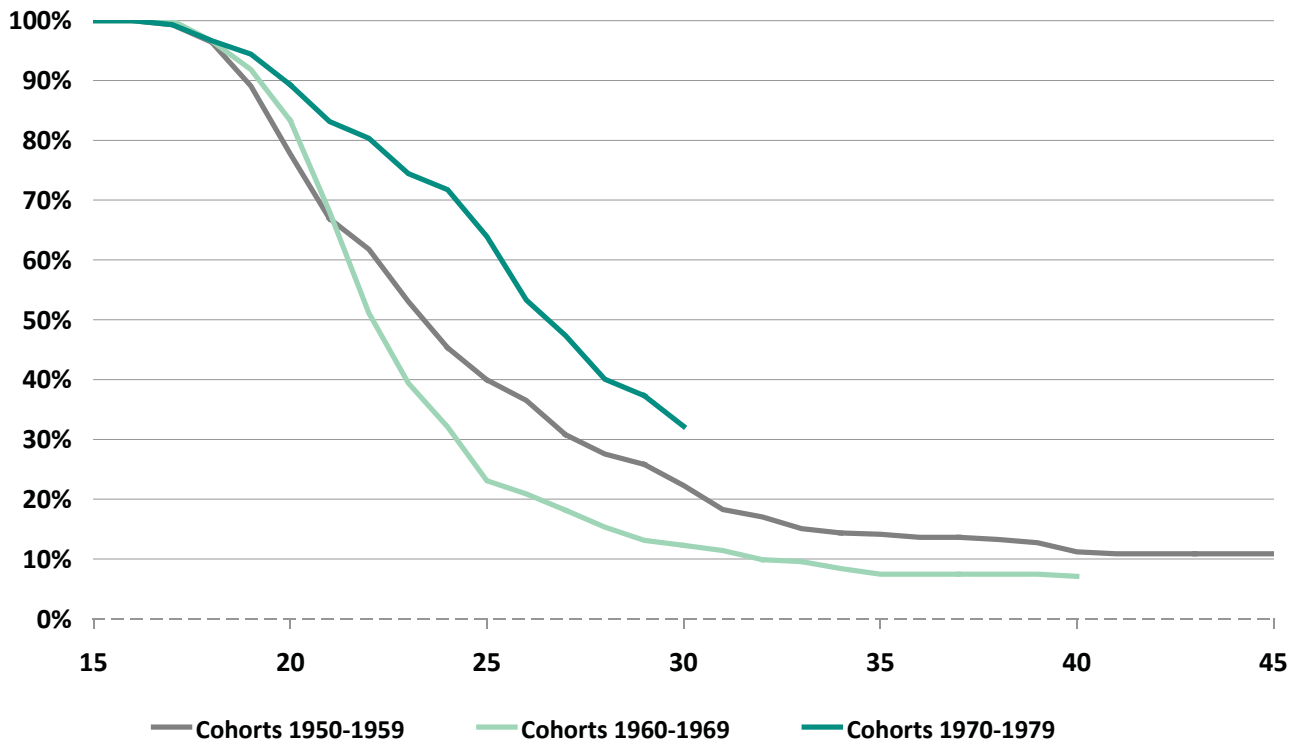


Note: Respondents who gave birth before age 15 were excluded from the sample.

Source: GGS wave 1, weighted estimates

**Figure VI**

Percentage of childless respondents, estimates from Kaplan-Meier survival curves, East Germany



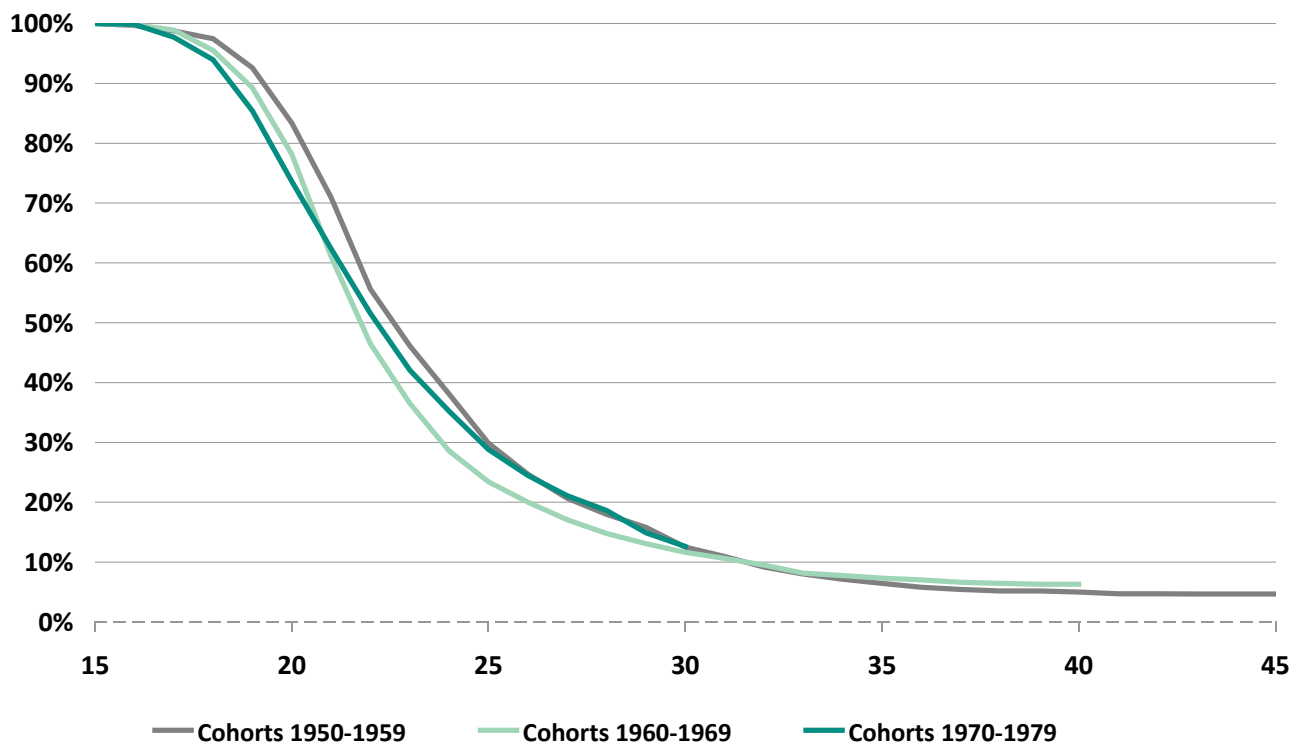
Note: Respondents who gave birth before age 15 were excluded from the sample.

Source: GGS wave 1, weighted estimates



**Figure VII**

Percentage of childless respondents, estimates from Kaplan-Meier survival curves, the Russian Federation



Note: Respondents who gave birth before age 15 were excluded from the sample.

Source: GGS wave 1, weighted estimates

### 3.2 Number of biological, step-, foster and adopted children

Table 14 gives an account of the average number of children of women aged 18 to 55. In this table, our main interest is not average family size, but the prevalence of step-, foster and adopted children. According to this table, only a negligible fraction of couples have adopted or foster children. Stepchildren, defined as prior children of the current partner, play a quite important role in France and the Russian Federation, however. They are less common in both parts of Germany. A French woman aged 18–55 has on average 0.15 step children, a Russian woman 0.14, an East German woman 0.07 and a West German woman 0.06. The vast majority of these children do not live in the respondent's household. This can

be explained by the fact that after separation, most children stay with their mothers. Hence from the perspective of women, most stepchildren do not live in the same household.

The subsequent analysis is limited to women aged 18 to 55 who have children aged 16 or younger living in the same household. We thus disregard childless women and women with older children. Due to the differences in fertility dynamics in the countries, limiting the sample to women with children in the household implies cutting out different segments of the population. In the case of West Germany, mostly those women are excluded who have not had any children yet; in the Russian Federation, one more often disregards respondents whose children have already left the parental home.

**Table 14**

Average number of biological, step-, foster and adopted children, women aged 18-55

	France	West Germany	East Germany	Russian Federation
<b>Biological children</b>				
In household	1.06	1.03	0.95	1.09
Not in household	0.37	0.23	0.39	0.34
Adopted/ foster children	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01
<b>Total</b>	1.45	1.28	1.34	1.44
<b>Children of partner</b>				
In household	0.01	0.01	--	0.01
Not in household	0.13	0.05	0.07	0.13
<b>Total</b>	0.15	0.06	0.07	0.14
<b>Sample size</b>	3,877	3,078	650	4,732

Source: GGS wave 1, weighted estimates

## 4 - LIVING CONDITIONS OF WOMEN WITH CHILDREN

### 4.1 Living arrangements

Table 15 provides the marital status of women with children by country. As vital statistics on non-marital childbearing (see table 12) have already suggested, married mothers are less common in France and in East Germany than in West Germany and the Russian Federation. Even though there are substantial differences in the prevalence of married motherhood between West Germany and both East Germany and France, what clearly stands out is the

Russian pattern. It is not only that Russian women with children are more often divorced, what is striking is the high proportion of widowed mothers. While the share of widowed mothers is negligible in the other three regimes, 6 per cent of Russian women with children aged 16 or younger are widowed. High mortality rates among Russian men are obviously a relevant factor for growing family diversity in the Russian case.

**Table 15**

Family status of women aged 18-55 with children (percentage)

	France	West Germany	East Germany	Russian Federation
<b>Married</b>	66.0	79.9	69.0	66.8
<b>Divorced</b>	9.5	7.5	7.6	17.0
<b>Widowed</b>	1.9	0.6	1.2	6.3
<b>Never married</b>	22.7	12.0	22.3	10.0
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Sample size</b>	1,940	1,757	358	3,169

Note: The sample only comprises women who live with their (biological, step-, foster or adopted) children aged 16 or younger in the same household.

Source: GGS wave 1, weighted estimates

Research on the changing meaning of marriage and single parenthood has underlined the importance of distinguishing unmarried mothers by the type of union they are living in. Table 16 distinguishes between women who are married and who are not

married (never married, widowed or divorced). The group of unmarried women is further distinguished by (a) whether the woman lives with a partner (non-marital union); (b) lives alone but has a partner who lives in another household (single, living-

apart-together); or (c) lives alone and does not have a partner (single, no partner). The investigation supports the notion that “unmarried childbearing is no longer synonymous with single parenthood” (Cherlin 2000: 399). However, there is substantial country variation. In France and East Germany,

only a minority of unmarried mothers are single mothers without a partner. In France, half the total unmarried women with children live with a partner. In East Germany, this applies to 43 per cent. In the Russian Federation and West Germany, only one third of unmarried women live with a partner.

**Table 16**

Living arrangements of women aged 18-55 with children (percentage)

	France	West Germany	East Germany	Russian Federation
<b>Marital union</b>	66.3	80.1	69.6	66.9
<b>Non-marital union</b>	17.0	6.0	13.2	9.9
<b>Single, living-apart-together</b>	3.7	3.2	6.4	5.8
<b>Single, no partner</b>	13.1	10.7	10.9	17.5
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Sample size</b>	1,930	1,752	356	3,158

*Note:* The sample only comprises women who live with their (biological, step-, foster or adopted) children aged 16 or younger in the same household.

*Source:* GGS wave 1, weighted estimates

Table 17 provides information on the household composition. Women have been classified according to whether they only cohabit with close family members or also with other relatives. “Nuclear family” encompasses women who only live together with their partners and children in the same household. “Multi-generation household” refers to women who live together with their partners and children as well as the couple’s parents or grandparents in the same household. The category “single mother” refers to women who live by themselves with their children. “Other” encompasses any other type of living arrangement (such as single mothers who live with other persons than a spouse in the same household or couples who share the household with other relatives such as brothers and sisters).

Research has shown that, from a historical perspective, co-residential patterns have strongly differed between Eastern and Western Europe (Plakans 1987, Reher 1998). The table supports the view of a continuation of an East-West divide in co-residential patterns. The nuclear family is the dominant arrangement in France, West Germany and East Germany. Multi-generation households play an inferior role in these regions. The situation in the Russian Federation is very different: only a little more than half of unmarried women with children live in nuclear families. Eleven per cent live with their partner and child(ren) in a multi-generation household, and 22 per cent live in other, particularly poly-nuclear or extended family, household arrangements.

**Table 17**

Household composition of women aged 18-55 with children (percentage)

	France	West Germany	East Germany	Russian Federation
<b>Nuclear family</b>	81.8	83.0	77.2	55.0
<b>More generation household</b>	0.5	0.9	3.6	10.7
<b>Single mother</b>	15.7	13.7	17.1	12.0
<b>Other</b>	2.1	2.4	2.1	22.3
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Sample size</b>	1,940	1,762	359	3,169

*Note:* The sample only comprises women who live with their (biological, step-, foster or adopted) children aged 16 or younger in the same household.

*Source:* GGS wave 1, weighted estimates

## 4.2 Employment and earner models

Table 18 provides an account of the employment situation of women with children in the countries under study. The differences in labour force participation by country are striking. More than 40 per cent of women with children in East Germany and France are working full-time, while in West Germany this only applies to 22 per cent of women. Instead, part-time work is the most common type of employment for mothers in West Germany. The Russian Federation again stands out. Despite the system transformation in the Russian Federation, mothers' labour force participation rates remain

on an exceptionally high level, with 64 per cent of mothers working full-time. This suggests that there is much more continuity in the Russian Federation with respect to female employment than is suspected in the literature (cf. Ashwin and Yakubovich 2005). These high percentages cannot be explained simply by differences in the age structure of our sample, i.e. the fact that the children of the Russian mothers were on average older than the children of the mothers in the other countries. After breaking down the sample by age of the youngest child, Russian mothers still display the highest full-time employment rates.

**Table 18**

Employment status of women aged 18-55 with children by age of youngest child (percentage)

	France	West Germany	East Germany	Russian Federation
<b>All women with children</b>				
Employed full-time	45.9	22.1	43.0	64.3
Employed part-time	23.1	35.2	22.7	3.3
Unemployed	9.4	5.4	22.8	6.6
Other	21.7	37.3	11.5	25.9
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Sample size</b>	1,940	1,762	359	3,169
<b>Women with children aged 0-2</b>				
Employed full-time	39.1	12.5	25.8	49.4
Employed part-time	24.5	27.2	24.8	3.3
Unemployed	11.9	5.1	25.5	8.4
Other	24.5	55.1	23.9	39.0
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Sample size</b>	807	672	102	778
<b>Women with children aged 3-5</b>				
Employed full-time	50.3	27.5	49.3	68.7
Employed part-time	22.1	39.7	21.9	3.3
Unemployed	7.7	5.6	21.9	6.0
Other	19.9	27.2	6.9	22.0
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>Sample size</b>	1,133	1,090	257	2,391

*Note:* The sample only comprises women who live with their (biological, step-, foster or adopted) children aged 16 or younger in the same household.

*Source:* GGS wave 1, weighted estimates

Table 19 additionally gives an account of the prevalence of different earner models. In line with previous research, we find that the male breadwinner model (where only the man is full-time employed) and the "modernized" male-breadwinner model (where the man works full-time and the woman

part-time) is the most common in West Germany, while the dual breadwinner model has greater prevalence in France and East Germany. The Russian Federation displays the highest proportions of dual breadwinner families.



**Table 19**

Earner model, women aged 18-55 with children (percentage)

	France	West Germany	East Germany	Russian Federation
<b>Both full-time</b>	34.6	15.7	31.9	40.4
<b>Man full-time, woman part-time</b>	18.9	30.7	19.1	2.1
<b>Man full-time, woman homemaker</b>	16.4	29.6	6.5	17.0
<b>Other</b>	13.4	10.1	25.3	17.3
<b>No partner</b>	16.7	13.9	17.1	23.1
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>N</b>	1,940	1,762	359	3,169

Note: The sample only comprises women who live with their (biological, step-, foster or adopted) children aged 16 or younger in the same household.

Source: GGS wave 1, weighted estimates

### 4.3 Economic conditions and housing situations

Economic development, societal living standards, and therefore the average economic conditions of families still differ widely between Eastern and Western Europe. If respondents are asked about whether they can make ends meet, 90 per cent of Russian women with children report that they encounter difficulties (table 20). West German mothers are, by comparison, the least concerned

about their economic situation. This might be well explicable in the light of the more advantaged situation of the German economy. But this result is nevertheless astonishing if one considers that relatively few mothers work full-time in West Germany and therefore do not fully contribute to the household income. France and East Germany lie somewhat in the middle, between the Russian Federation and West Germany.

**Table 20**Economic situation of household, women aged 18-55 with children (percentage)<sup>7</sup>

	France	West Germany	East Germany	Russian Federation
<b>Economic difficulties</b>	27.4	15.0	19.7	53.3
<b>Some economic difficulties</b>	27.9	22.9	31.0	37.3
<b>No economic difficulties</b>	44.7	62.1	49.3	9.4
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>N</b>	1,935	1,753	358	3,169

Note: The sample only comprises women who live with their (biological, step-, foster or adopted) children aged 16 or younger in the same household.

Source: GGS wave 1, weighted estimates

<sup>7</sup> Respondents were asked whether their household could make ends meet with great difficulty, with difficulty, with some difficulty, fairly easily, easily and very easily. We grouped "with great difficulty" and "with difficulty" into the category "economic difficulties". "Fairly easily", "easily" and "very easily" was grouped into "some economic difficulties".

Table 21 presents the findings on the level of satisfaction with the housing situation. The table supports research which has shown that the housing situation is of great concern in many Eastern European countries, while this is not the case in Western Europe. In the Russian Federation, the provision of sufficient housing has not been

achieved and it remains "a continuing source of dissatisfaction" (Manning 1995: 217), especially among young couples. The table also points to minor differences that still exist between East and West Germany with respect to housing conditions (Groh-Samberg and Goebel 2007).

**Table 21**Satisfaction with housing situation, women aged 18-55 with children (percentage)<sup>8</sup>

	France	West Germany	East Germany	Russian Federation
<b>Satisfied (0–2)</b>	66.3	70.0	64.6	26.1
<b>Somewhat satisfied (3–7)</b>	31.2	27.1	32.1	57.5
<b>Not satisfied (8–10)</b>	2.6	3.0	3.3	16.3
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100
<b>N</b>	1,940	1,762	359	3,162

Note: The sample only comprises women who live with their (biological, step-, foster or adopted) children aged 16 or younger in the same household.

Source: GGS wave 1, weighted estimates

<sup>8</sup> Respondents were asked to evaluate how satisfied they were with their housing situation on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 represents “not at all satisfied” and 10 “completely satisfied”. We regrouped this variable into “satisfied” (0–2), “somewhat satisfied” (3–7) and “not satisfied” (8–10).

## 5 - MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Description of variables

The previous investigation has shown significant differences in terms of living arrangements and living conditions in France, the Russian Federation and East and West Germany. We now turn to the question of how family forms and living conditions relate to each other. As an indicator of a family's economic situation, we use the variable that indicates whether the respondent feels that the household is able to make ends meet. On the one hand, one could argue that this question could be understood differently, depending on country and language, making it difficult to use it for a cross-national study. On the other, objective indicators such as income also entail difficulties. There is not only the problem of comparing the household income in countries with different living standards; household income must be standardized by size of the household, which makes the investigation quite dependent on the equivalent measure chosen. This is particularly important if one is interested in the relationship between family structure and living conditions, given that non-standard families differ from standard families in terms of household size. One could therefore argue that a subjective measure, accounting for whether a household is able to make ends meets or not, is as useful for cross-national comparisons as objective economic indicators such as household income.

The major independent variable in our investigation is the woman's current living arrangement.

We distinguished between married couples, cohabiting couples, single mothers who do not live together with their partners (the living-apart-together arrangement) and single mothers who do not have a partner. Control variables are the migration status (i.e. whether the person was born in the country of interview or not), the number of children who live in the household, the age of the youngest child in the household and the age of the respondent. Education is classified according to the ISCED -code, distinguishing respondents who are still in education from respondents with a low level of education (ISCED 1 and 2), a medium level (ISCED 3 and 4) and a high level (ISCED 5 and 6). Employment status is also taken into account. We distinguish between women who are employed full-time, employed part-time, unemployed and others. (Table 25 gives the distribution of the sample).

### 5.2 Determinants of the economic situation of the family

Table 22 provides results from a logistic regression model in which the dependent variable indicates if the respondent is concerned about whether her household is able to make ends meet. We estimated a stepwise model, inserting the woman's educational level and her employment status successively. The rationale behind this procedure is that compositional effects may play an important role in understanding the relationship between family structure and social disadvantages. Prior research has shown that unmarried mothers are more often

less educated (McLanahan 2004), and also that the employment patterns of unmarried and married mothers differ. Therefore, the association between living arrangement and economic situation may be explained by compositional differences with respect to married and unmarried women.

Model 1 confirms our previous finding that strong country differences exist with respect to concerns about the economic situation of the household. The least difficulties were reported by West German mothers, most difficulties by Russian mothers. As expected, economic well-being also strongly varies with the woman's family status. We find a clear hierarchical order: married unions perform best, followed by non-marital unions and then living-apart-together arrangements. Worst off are single mothers. Apart from this, the control variables give the expected pattern: migrants face more difficulties than non-migrants. The higher the number of children, the more likely it is that the household

finds it difficult to make ends meet. Overall, age of the child and age of the woman do not affect the household's economic well-being.

In model 2, we have entered the woman's level of education. Higher education strongly reduces a household's economic difficulties. Model 3, finally, includes the woman's employment status. Women who are not working are much less well-off in economic terms. Even after inclusion of these variables, the impact of the living arrangement remains very much the same. This suggests that the relationship between family form and economic well-being is a robust one and not distorted by compositional effects. Nevertheless, there might be interaction effects that are concealed in a simple model, e.g. single motherhood may have a very different meaning or very different economic implications for women with higher education and those with little education.

**Table 22**

Logistic regression model on economic difficulties (odds ratio)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Country</b>			
France	1	1	1
West Germany	0.47***	0.39***	0.39***
East Germany	0.71***	0.63***	0.51***
Russian Federation	3.21***	2.64***	2.75***
<b>Living arrangement</b>			
Marital union	1	1	1
Non-marital union	1.43***	1.37***	1.35***
Living-apart-together	2.43***	2.50***	2.43***
Single	3.26***	3.15***	3.05***
<b>Migration status</b>			
Born in country of interview	1	1	1
Born in another country	1.40***	1.32***	1.28***
<b>Number of children in the household</b>			
One child	1	1	1
Two children	1.26***	1.21***	1.20***
Three and more	2.00***	1.71***	1.63***
<b>Age of youngest child</b>			
Age 0–3	1	1	1
Age 4–6	0.90	0.84	0.88
Age 7–10	0.91	0.85	0.90
Age 11–16	1.17	0.98	1.06

**Table 22**

Logistic regression model on economic difficulties (odds ratio) (continued)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Age of woman</b>			
Age 18–24	1	1	1
Age 25–29	0.80	0.91	0.96
Age 30–34	0.74**	0.93	1.03
Age 35–40	0.81	1.07	1.19
<b>Level of education</b>			
In education		0.92	0.91
Low		1	1
Medium		0.65***	0.68***
High		0.34***	0.38***
Missing		1.02	1.01
<b>Employment status</b>			
Employed full-time			1
Employed part-time			0.97
Unemployed			2.89***
Other			1.33***
<b>Goodness of fit</b>			
Log-likelihood in starting model	-4,706	-4,706	-4,706
Log-likelihood in final model	-4,060	-3,959	-3,900

Notes: The sample only comprises women aged 18–55 who live with their (biological, step-, foster or adopted) children aged 16 or younger in the same household. The dependent variable equals one for respondents who report that it is difficult to make end meets. It equals zero for all other respondents.

Source: GGS wave 1

### 5.3 Interrelation of living arrangement, education and economic situation

Table 23 (see also figure VIII) provides results from an interaction of level of education and family form. The table shows that, independent of educational level, single women face more difficulties than married women. Worst off are clearly single mothers with little education. But also among the highly educated, single motherhood is accompanied by economic difficulties. This result goes against the idea that highly educated mothers are by and large protected against the negative economic consequences of unmarried motherhood. Another way to read the table is that there are hardly any differences in terms of economic difficulties between less educated married mothers and highly educated single mothers. From this point of view, marriage and investment in marketable human capital appear as two alternative strategies for women to cope with economic difficulties.

### *Interrelation of living arrangement, employment and economic situation*

Table 24 provides results from an interaction model of employment status and family form. To guarantee sufficient sample size in each category, we grouped part-time and full-time employed women in one category, and unemployed and others into the category “not employed”. The investigation strengthens the finding that unmarried mothers fare worse than married mothers. However, it also shows that employment status is an important intervening factor. The odds of finding the economic situation difficult increase by 185 per cent if one compares single and employed women with married and employed women. In the group of unemployed women, the odds increase by 300 per cent if one compares married and single women<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, it is striking that the unemployed married mothers face less difficulties than the employed single mothers.

<sup>9</sup> We arrived at this number by dividing 6.20 by 1.53, subtracting 1 from it and multiplying it by 100.



**Table 23**

Logistic regression model on economic difficulties, results from interaction of living arrangement and level of education (odds ratio)

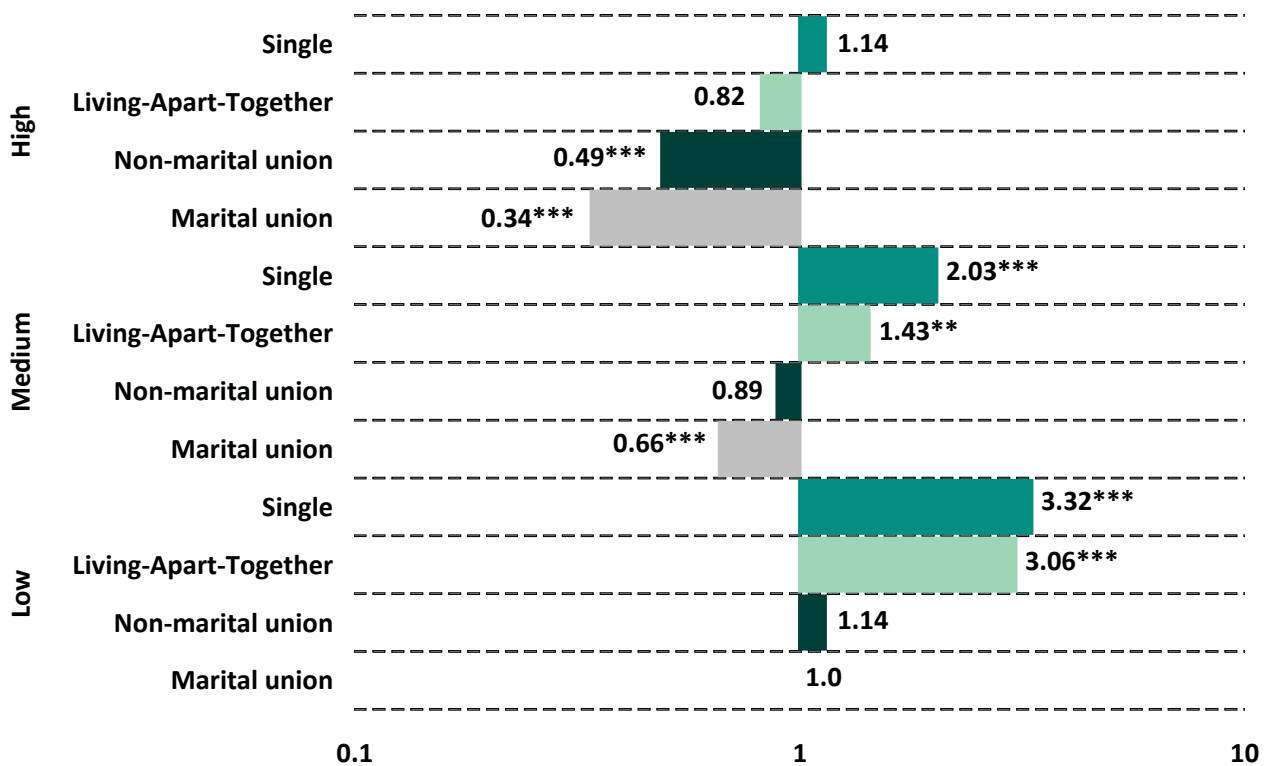
	Level of education		
	Low	Medium	High
<b>Living arrangement</b>			
Marital union	1	0.66***	0.34***
Non-marital union	1.14	0.89	0.49***
Living-apart-together	3.06***	1.43**	0.82
Single	3.32***	2.03***	1.14

*Notes:* The sample only comprises women aged 18-55 who live with their (biological, step-, foster or adopted) children aged 16 or younger in the same household. The dependent variable equals one for respondents who report that it is difficult to make end meets. It equals zero for all other respondents. Control variables in model are: country, nationality, number of children in household, age of woman, educational participation, employment status.

*Source:* GGS wave 1

**Figure VIII**

Logistic regression model on economic difficulties, results from interaction of living arrangement and level of education (odds ratio)



*Note:* See table 23

**Table 24**

Logistic regression model on economic difficulties, results from interaction of living arrangement and employment status (odds ratio)

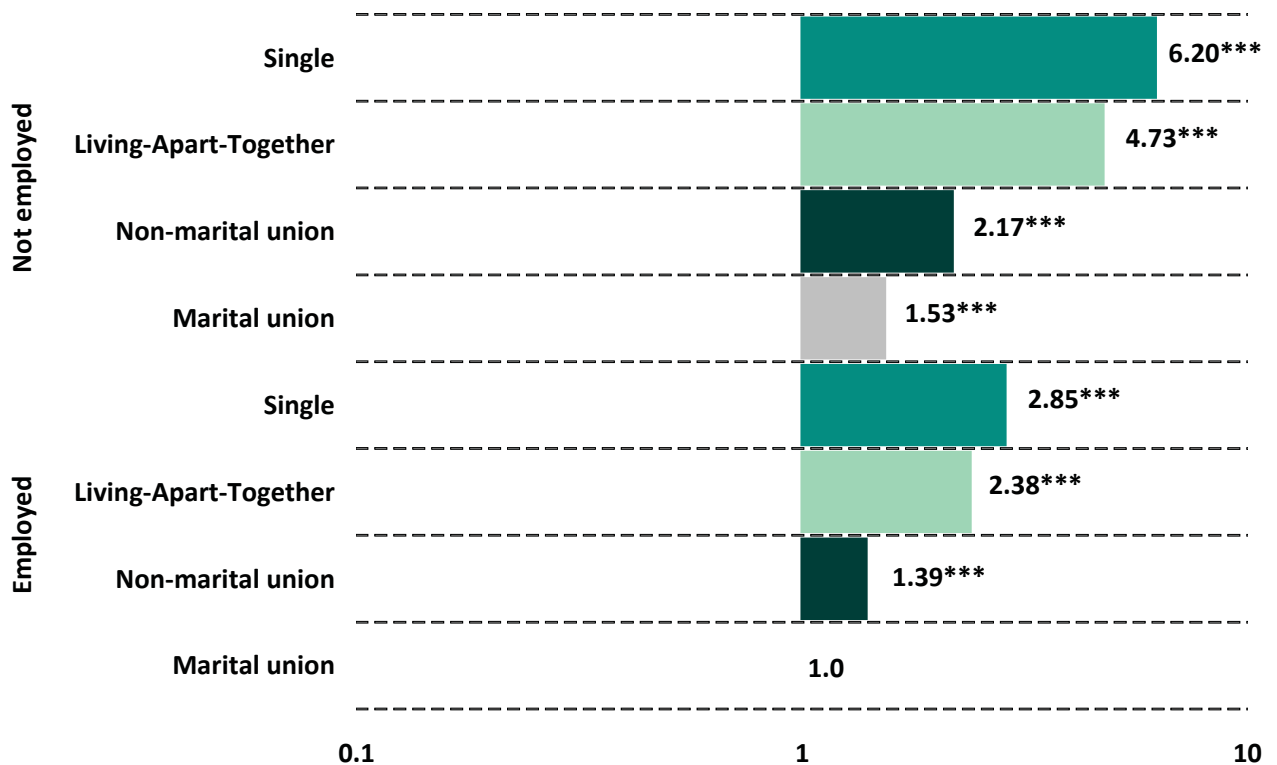
Living arrangement	Employment status	
	Employed	Not employed
Marital union	1	1.53 ***
Non-marital union	1.39 ***	2.17 ***
Living-apart-together	2.38 ***	4.73 ***
Single	2.85 ***	6.20 ***

*Note:* The sample only comprises women aged 18-55 who live with their (biological, step-, foster or adopted) children aged 16 or younger in the same household. The dependent variable equals one for respondents who report that it is difficult to make end meets. It equals zero for all other respondents. Control variables in model are: Country, nationality, number of children in household, age of woman, level of education.

*Source:* GGS wave 1

**Figure IX**

Logistic regression model on economic difficulties, results from interaction of living arrangement and employment status (odds ratio)



*Note:* See table 24

*Separate investigation by country*

Finally, table 25 provides results from separate models for France, the Russian Federation and East and West Germany. Some more striking differences between the four cases become visible. What all the countries have in common is that single women who do not have a partner fare substantially worse than married women. We also find that there exist only small differences in the economic performance between non-marital and marital couples in France, East Germany and the Russian Federation. Only for West Germany, where non-marital family forms are still comparatively uncommon, we do find marked and highly significant differences in terms of economic well-being between marital and non-marital couples.

Having more children is associated with greater economic hardship in France and West Germany. Especially in the Russian Federation, women with three or more children report more often than

one- or two-child mothers that they find it difficult to make ends meet. In East Germany, we do not find much of an association between the number of children and economic well-being. This might relate to the fact that the East German sample is small and the share of women with three children is rather small (see table 26). In West Germany, the younger the child, the greater the concern is about the economic situation of the household. This is a plausible finding given that maternal employment is lowest when the child is very young and that forgone earnings of the mothers are only partially compensated by public subsidies. In France and the Russian Federation, we find surprisingly little impact of the age of the child on economic well-being. In all countries, less education is associated with greater concerns about the economic situation of the household. The same is true of unemployment, which substantially increases the odds of finding it difficult to make ends meet.

**Table 25**  
Logistic regression model on economic difficulties (odds ratio)

	France	West Germany	East Germany	Russian Federation
<b>Living arrangement</b>				
Marital union	1	1	1	1
Non-marital union	1.35*	2.34***	0.71	1.22
Living-apart-together	3.54***	3.02***	4.27***	1.88***
Single	3.66***	5.19***	1.69	2.36***
<b>Nationality</b>				
Native	1	1	1	1
Other nationality	1.14	2.11***	0.93	1.10
<b>Number of children in the household</b>				
One child	1	1	1	1
Two children	1.05	1.25	0.71	1.24***
Three and more	1.46***	1.41*	0.81	2.09***
<b>Age of youngest child</b>				
Age 0–3	1	1	1	1
Age 4–6	0.94	0.68	6.11***	0.89
Age 7–10	0.87	0.63*	7.10***	1.14
Age 11–16	0.97*	0.71*	4.98***	1.22
<b>Age of woman</b>				
Age 20–24	1	1	1	1
Age 25–29	1.50	0.80	0.44	0.82
Age 30–34	0.87	1.18	0.12**	0.99
Age 35–40	0.83	0.90	0.20	1.41*

**Table 25**

Logistic regression model on economic difficulties, odds ratio (continued)

	France	West Germany	East Germany	Russian Federation
<b>Level of education</b>				
In education	1.10	1.51	3.29	0.60*
Low	1	1	1	1
Medium	0.54***	0.57***	1.11	0.73**
High	0.46***	0.39***	0.21*	0.34***
Missing	---	0.60	1.42	1.03
<b>Employment status</b>				
Employed full-time	1	1	1	1
Employed part-time	1.24	1.36	0.76	0.91
Unemployed	2.82***	4.47***	3.90***	2.48***
Other	1.78***	1.77***	2.08	1.18
<b>Goodness of fit</b>				
Log-likelihood in starting model	-1,155	-754	-183	-2,178
Log-likelihood in final model	-1,028	-646	-144	-2,003

Notes: The sample only comprises women aged 18–55 who live with their (biological, step-, foster or adopted) children aged 16 or younger in the same household. The dependent variable equals one for respondents who report that it is difficult to make ends meet. It equals zero for all other respondents.

Source: GGS wave 1

**Table 26**

Composition of the sample for multivariate analysis (percentage)

	France	West Germany	East Germany	Russian Federation
<b>Household can make ends meet</b>				
With difficulty	0.29	0.16	0.21	0.54
With some or no difficulties	0.71	0.84	0.79	0.46
<b>Living arrangement</b>				
Marital union	0.60	0.75	0.63	0.61
Non-marital union	0.16	0.06	0.14	0.09
Living apart together	0.24	0.19	0.23	0.30
Single	0.18	0.15	0.16	0.22
<b>Nationality</b>				
Native	0.89	0.82	0.94	0.90
Other nationality	0.11	0.18	0.06	0.10
<b>Number of children in the household</b>				
One child	0.37	0.39	0.54	0.61
Two children	0.42	0.43	0.35	0.32
Three and more	0.21	0.19	0.11	0.06
<b>Age of youngest child</b>				
Age 0–3	0.23	0.21	0.15	0.14
Age 4–6	0.19	0.18	0.14	0.11
Age 7–10	0.20	0.19	0.12	0.14
Age 11–16	0.39	0.42	0.59	0.62



**Table 26**

Composition of the sample for multivariate analysis (percentage) (continued)

	France	West Germany	East Germany	Russian Federation
<b>Age of woman</b>				
Age 20–24	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.07
Age 25–29	0.07	0.09	0.06	0.13
Age 30–34	0.19	0.17	0.17	0.16
Age 35–40	0.70	0.71	0.72	0.64
<b>Level of education</b>				
In education	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.02
Low	0.23	0.13	0.06	0.12
Medium	0.14	0.60	0.65	0.50
High	0.62	0.23	0.27	0.22
Missing	--	0.01	0.01	0.14
<b>Employment status</b>				
Employed full-time	0.47	0.22	0.42	0.65
Employed part-time	0.24	0.36	0.21	0.04
Unemployed	0.10	0.06	0.25	0.07
Other	0.15	0.32	0.10	0.15
Missing	0.04	0.05	0.02	0.09
<b>N</b>	1,925	1,743	355	3,158

Source: GGS wave 1

## 6 - CONCLUSIONS

This paper has provided an overview on the living conditions of families in France, the Russian Federation, East and West Germany. We have shown that mothers' employment patterns and family structures differ vastly between the three countries (and four regions). Unmarried parenthood as well as maternal full-time employment was found to be the least common in West Germany. This fits well the idea of Germany being a country that gives priority to the traditional family. However, East Germany, which is subject to basically the same set of social policies, displays widely different family structures. The greater variety of family forms in East Germany is supported by the greater availability of public day care – although it also reflects a tradition of stronger female labour force attachment inherited from the socialist past. Non-marital motherhood and maternal full-time employment is as common in East Germany as in France. In both France and East Germany, unmarried women mostly live with a partner. In West Germany, the proportions of unmarried mothers are lower. However, those who are unmarried more often do not have a partner which they cohabit with. The Russian Federation

shows an exceptional pattern in that unmarried mothers are more often divorced and widowed than in the other countries. The Russian Federation also has the highest share of full-time employed mothers, despite the fact that public day care has been drastically reduced since the dissolution of communism.

Investigations of the economic conditions of families reveal a huge gap between Germany and France on the one hand and the Russian Federation on the other. Apart from the general situation being much more adverse in the Russian Federation than in the other countries, we find that in all countries unmarried mothers are economically more vulnerable than married mothers. At the same time, it is important to distinguish cohabiting women from women who do not live with their partner. Apart from West Germany, we do not find major differences in economic well-being between cohabiting and married mothers. Unmarried women who do not live with a partner are at a disadvantage all along the way. Being gainfully employed, however, is an important factor enhancing the economic situation of unmarried single mothers.

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